

Here are some ideas to get you started.

### LEADERS:

**Need some help? It's okay. We all do.**

A full walk-through of the study guide with notes on how to navigate each session is available at [groupleaders.org/addressthemess](http://groupleaders.org/addressthemess).

### VIDEOS:

The video sessions that complement this study can be found on the:

- **Anthology Mobile App** (free on the Apple App Store and Google Play)
- **Address the Mess DVD** (available on Amazon)



### DURING A GROUP MEETING

#### 1. HANG OUT.

*(About 30 minutes)*

Our lives move so fast these days. Take some time to talk about what's going on in the lives of those in your group. Asking about things like job interviews, the health of their kids, and how their weeks are going goes a long way in building community.

#### 2. WATCH THE VIDEO AND DOODLE ALONG.

*(About 20 minutes)*

When we designed this study guide, we had note-taking in mind. So while you're watching the video, take advantage of the extra space and the grid pages for notes and/or drawings, depending on your note-taking style.

#### 3. DISCUSS AND COMPLETE THE ACTIVITIES.

*(About 45 minutes)*

Depending on the session, your group will have Discussion Questions and scenarios to think through, as well as activities to do. Putting pen to paper can give you deeper insight into the content.

#### 4. PRAY.

*(About 5 minutes)*

Keep it simple and real. Use the prayer provided. Ask God to help you apply what you've learned that week.

**ANTHOLOGY** is a great way to get free videos you can stream to your device or TV.

**HANG OUT**

Don't shortchange this part of your group meeting.

Connecting relationally will improve the group discussion later and help your group members get more out of the meeting.

# PART 1

## *The Mess in the Mirror*

### VIDEO RECAP

Good news. It's not just you.

Christians believe:

The mess that brings us \_\_\_\_\_ is  
the mess that brought God \_\_\_\_\_.  
The mess is a **lens** through which we **discover** God.

“But nobody’s \_\_\_\_\_.”

There is a **perfect** that nobody is.

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin...For all have sinned and [all] fall short of the glory of God.*

(Romans 3:19-20, 23)

\_\_\_\_\_ of our messes awakens us to something outside of us to which we are accountable.

I know a mess when I see one, because I am one.

#### **Answer Key for Blanks**

together	perfect
near	Awareness

Encourage your group members to follow along and fill out the VIDEO RECAP as they watch the video. It will help them remember what they see and hear.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 When there's a mess at home or at work, do you tend to jump right into cleanup mode or do you feel overwhelmed? Why do you think you respond the way you do?
- 2 Why do you think it's so hard to admit when things are a mess?
- 3 In the message, Andy said, "When it comes to the people around us whose lives are messy, we should be students, not critics."

A. Write down the name of a person or group of people you find it easy to judge based on their messes.

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B. Now write down something you can do to be a student rather than a critic (i.e., to learn the story behind their messes).

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If you want, share your answers with the group.

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- 4 Have you ever met a person whose messes prevented him or her from believing that God could respond with love? Did his or her belief ever change and if so, how?
- 5 The harder we work to get a right standing with God, the more aware we become of our shortcomings. Is there a law you're under that's reminding you of a standard you don't meet?
- 6 Our shortcomings are also reminders of how much we need God. Is this comforting to you? Frustrating? Motivating? Why?

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### QUESTION 1

This is an icebreaker question, meant to ease you into the discussion while also helping you think a little bit about the topic. It's okay if the conversation remains light.

### QUESTION 2

This question is broad. There are no right or wrong answers. Just brainstorm ideas with your group.

### QUESTION 3

Give your group members a few minutes to work through the steps of this exercise. The best way to get them to share their answers is to start by sharing yours.

### QUESTION 4

This question is designed to get your group to starting thinking about the connections between messes and faith, but from the safe distance of what they've witnessed in other people's lives.

### QUESTION 5

With this question, the discussion turns personal. Give your group members the opportunity to speak first, but be ready with an example from your life in order to encourage them to participate.

### QUESTION 6

As your group members answer this question, listen actively and don't offer correction or simple answers to tensions they feel. Even if you disagree, remember that having the freedom to be honest is an important element of spiritual growth.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Is there anyone or any group you secretly condemn or judge?

After this week's discussion, can you find common ground with that person or group?

When you find yourself thinking of that person or group, say to yourself, "I know a mess when I see one, because I am one."

**I KNOW A  
*mess*  
WHEN I SEE ONE  
*because*  
I AM ONE.**

## PRAYER

God, help me to recognize and acknowledge the messes in my life so they don't stand between you and me. Help me to experience your grace and to know that through Jesus, you don't judge me based on my messes.



### THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Remind your group members to think through these questions on their own.

You can use this PRAYER to kick off group prayer or encourage your group members to reflect on it throughout the week.

Free stuff (maybe)!

# PART 2

## Best Mess Ever

### VIDEO RECAP

Your mess has the potential to bring God near to you.

*For God did not send his Son into the world to \_\_\_\_\_ the world, but to \_\_\_\_\_ the world through him.*

(John 3:17)

Jesus told the adulterous woman, "Look at me."

Jesus told Zacchaeus, "Come down to me."

To the woman at the well married five times,

Jesus said, "Come close to me."

To the man on the cross, he said, "You're coming with me."

Jesus offered himself as the solution.

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

(John 8:12)

Follow me.

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

(Matthew 7:24-25)

You can't \_\_\_\_\_ your way out of a mess you \_\_\_\_\_ yourself into.

You can follow your way out.

I messed up. I gave up. I looked up. God showed up.

#### Answer Key for Blanks

condemn	pray
save	behaved

To prepare for the group discussion, spend some time this week reading and reflecting on John 3:17, John 8:12, and Matthew 7:24-25.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 John 3:17 says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Does this match your earliest impression of God? Is it how you think of him now?
- 2 Many people’s stories include, “I messed up. I gave up. I looked up. God showed up.” Can you describe an experience like this from your life or the life of someone you know?
- 3 What are some practical ways to follow Jesus when you’re in the middle of a mess?
- 4 In the message, Andy said, “Jesus did not pull back from messy people.” Do you know anyone who follows Jesus’ example in this way? What would it look like for you to do so?

- 5 What mess are you dealing with right now (at home, at work, in your finances)? Take a few minutes to individually to write down how you could take the steps that Jesus offered to the messy people he met.

- **“Look at me.”**

*How can you recognize Jesus’ presence in your life?*

- **“Come down to me.”**

*How can you move away from your mess and toward Jesus?*

- **“Come close to me.”**

*How can you draw strength from Jesus?*

- **“You’re coming with me.”**

*What can you do to follow Jesus?*

If you feel comfortable doing so, share your responses with the group.

### QUESTION 1

Remember that this question asks group members to share their opinions. Even if you don’t agree with people’s answers, it’s important to allow them to speak and be heard. This will benefit the group in the long run.

### QUESTION 2

Group members may be reluctant to share, or they may need time to think of examples. If necessary, be ready to start the conversation by offering an example from your life. Be transparent.

### QUESTION 3

Let your group members go wide, thinking of as many examples as they can.

### QUESTION 4

This question addresses a specific tension: Is it really possible to respond to our messes by giving up, looking up, and trusting that God will show up? Hearing examples from your life may encourage group members who have doubts.

### QUESTION 5

Allow a few minutes for group members to work through this brief exercise. Be ready to share how you answered.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Read back over Matthew 7:24-25 (you can find those verses in the Video Recap).

What's one thing you can do this week to put God's Word into practice in each of these areas of your life?

- Your finances
- Your work
- Your family relationships

## PRAYER

God, I messed up. I don't want to give up. My eyes are on you. Please show me the way forward. Show me the way out. I trust you.

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**THE MESS**  
*that brings us*  
**TOGETHER IS WHAT**  
*brings God*  
**NEAR.**

POST A  
PICTURE OF  
YOUR GROUP USING  
#AddresstheMess

*Your next study could be on us!*

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THIS WEEK THING ABOUT ...

Encourage your  
group members to  
follow through on  
the practical application  
in this section.

# PART 3

Inside Out

## VIDEO RECAP

Christians believe Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the little messes, all the messes of the \_\_\_\_\_. But, he loves us too much to \_\_\_\_\_ us that way.

Christianity is not just about staying out of trouble.

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

(Philippians 1:3-6)

Christianity is an \_\_\_\_\_ faith.

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.*

(Philippians 1:9-10)

### Answer Key for Blanks

loves	leave
world	inside out

To prepare to lead this part, spend some time throughout the week reading and thinking about Philippians 1:3-6, 9-10.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 At some point in your faith, did you assume you had to earn God's approval with good behavior? Where do you think you got that idea?
- 2 How does the pattern of Christians messing up, seeking forgiveness, and then messing up again influence the way people outside of the faith view the church?
- 3 Andy suggested that following Jesus is not primarily about trying harder to behave better, but instead about letting God change you on the inside. What do you think about this?
- 4 In the scenarios below, talk about what it would look like to respond in such a way that your love for other people "may abound more and more."

### SCENARIO #1

A colleague publicly takes full credit for a project on which you two collaborated. How do you respond?

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### SCENARIO #2

You learn that a friend has repeated something to others that you told him or her in confidence. How do you respond?

### SCENARIO #3

A family member asked your advice but did not do what you suggested. Now things aren't going well for him or her. What do you do?

- 5 Consider the following statements and fill in the blanks.

I'm a better \_\_\_\_\_ than I was five years ago. In five more years, I want to be a better \_\_\_\_\_ than I am now.

In light of what you just wrote, why do you think you're better than you were five years ago? Did your behavior change or did your heart change? Or both?

- 6 Cleaning up a mess takes time. Unfortunately, there's no quick fix that will make you suddenly more happy, healthy, wealthy, or powerful. What are some good things that might happen on the inside—in your heart—as a result of taking the time to work through a mess?

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### QUESTION 1

Remember: some of your group members may currently believe they have to earn God's approval.

### QUESTION 2

Here's a follow-up question to keep the discussion going: Christian, like all people, will mess up sometimes. How can they do so without negatively affecting how people outside the faith view the church?

### QUESTION 3

Allow space for group members to disagree. You don't have to change their minds. Ask questions instead of offering rebuttals. Trust that the conversation may help people change their own minds.

### QUESTION 4

Depending on the amount of time you have, discuss one or more of these scenarios. Listen actively to how your group members respond. Ask follow-up questions . . . especially when you disagree with someone.

### QUESTION 5

Give your group members a couple of minutes to answer this question. It is designed to help them better understand how change takes place in their lives.

### QUESTION 6

Let your group members brainstorm responses to this question. The more answers, the better.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

Following Jesus isn't primarily about doing what's right. It's about doing what's right *for others*.

Fill in some of the blanks with things you've prayed for in the last week.

- Help me to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Help my \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Keep me from \_\_\_\_\_.
- Give me \_\_\_\_\_.
- Bless my \_\_\_\_\_.

How could you reframe those prayers to instead be about learning and discerning how to best love other people?

## PRAYER

God, I don't just want to stay out of trouble. Complete the work you've begun in me—help me see as you see and do as you say. Teach me to love others the way you love me.

**YOU CANNOT PRAY  
YOUR WAY OUT OF A  
*mess* THAT YOU BEHAVED  
YOUR WAY INTO,  
BUT *you* CAN FOLLOW  
YOUR WAY *out*.**



*Your next study could be on us!*

THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT . . .

Encourage your group members to follow through on the practical application in this section.

This is the bottom line for this week of the study. It's easy to remember and it's worth memorizing.

**Remember:**  
free stuff (maybe)!

# PART 4

Messy-er

## VIDEO RECAP

### DAVID'S STORY

- When David was a shepherd boy, the prophet Samuel came to his house and anointed him to be king of Israel.
- Problem: Israel already had a king.
- Then there was that David and Goliath thing.
- David becomes an overnight sensation.

*"In everything he did he had great \_\_\_\_\_"*

(1 Samuel 18:14)

- Eventually, Saul does try to kill David.
- David flees.
- Then it seems that the Lord has delivered Saul into David's hands.

Ignore **virtue** and you will eventually make a **mess**.

*Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground ... This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to **kill you**, but I **spared you**; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, **because he is the Lord's anointed**.' ... May the \_\_\_\_\_ judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but **my hand will not touch you**.*

(1 Samuel 24:8, 10, 12)

I'm opting for \_\_\_\_\_ over \_\_\_\_\_.

Every mess comes **prepackaged** with some bad options.

### Answer Key for Blanks

success	virtue
Lord	hurt-you

To prepare for this discussion, watch the video before your group meeting and follow along with this outline. Read 1 Samuel 24:8–12. The better you know this story from the Old Testament, the easier it will be to lead the discussion.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

- 1 What is one thing in your life (finances, health, responsibilities) you wish there was a quick fix for?
- 2 Talk about a time when you faced a mess and either tried or resisted the quick fix. What happened?
- 3 Andy defined virtue as integrity, honesty, patience, and self-control.
  - A. Write down then share your personal definition for one (or more) of those characteristics. Or talk about someone you know who consistently displays one of those qualities.
  - B. Place check marks in the two columns below and if you're comfortable, share your responses with the group.
- 4 In the passage Andy presented (1 Samuel 24:1-13), it would have been easy for David to assume that God had purposely delivered Saul into his hands. When you're in the middle of a mess, how do you discern what God is asking you to do versus what your emotions may be convincing you to do?
- 5 What are some practical ways to identify the virtuous options for fixing a mess?

	Which is the hardest for you to exhibit when you're in the midst of a mess?	Which is most likely to land you in a future mess?
Integrity		
Honesty		
Patience		
Self-Control		

### QUESTION 1

This question may be challenging for some group members. But if people open up, the remainder of the discussion is likely to go well (especially Question 3). Be ready to offer your own example in order to encourage others to share.

### QUESTION 2

Let your group members go first, but be prepared to answer this question yourself. Your level of transparency will influence how transparent the rest of the group chooses to be.

### QUESTION 3

Give your group members a few minutes to answer the two parts of this question. Encourage them to share when they're done.

### QUESTION 4

This is a theologically sticky question. That's okay. Speak from your own experience, but allow room for difference of opinion. Here's a good clarifying question if you need to redirect the discussion: *When you have to make a big decision, who (besides God) or what do you turn to for wisdom or advice?*

### QUESTION 5

Encourage your group members to brainstorm answers to this question. Challenge them to be specific.

## THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT...

At the root of most personal messes is a breakdown of virtue (integrity, honesty, patience, and self-control).

Ignore virtue and you will eventually make a mess.

You can't clean up a mess caused by a failure of virtue with another failure of virtue.

Think about a mess you're currently facing.

1. What's the story you want to be able to tell one day?
2. How can you display integrity, honesty, patience, and self-control?
3. Who will hold you accountable for choosing the virtuous solution?

## PRAYER

Dear God, when I'm tempted to take the easy way out, help me do the right thing. Give me the courage to be \_\_\_\_\_ (generous, kind, patient, self-controlled) even when it's difficult. And help me trust you with the outcome.

**IGNORE VIRTUE**  
*and you will*  
**EVENTUALLY MAKE**  
*a mess.*

POST A  
PICTURE OF  
YOUR GROUP USING  
#AddresstheMess

*Your next study could be on us!*

THIS WEEK, THINK ABOUT . . .

Use the questions  
in this section  
to bring the discussion  
into the present.

Challenge your  
group members  
to take actions.

Information alone  
won't result in  
spiritual growth.

*Applying* what  
they've learned will.

Last chance  
for free stuff  
(maybe)!